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**Author:** Monika Bogdanowska, Ewa Bogdanowska-Jakubowska

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Nika Bogdanowska  
Ewa Bogdanowska-Jakubowska

## DIFFERENCES IN IMPRESSION MANAGEMENT

### **Abstrakt**

#### **Różnice w zarządzaniu wrażeniami**

Wygłaszanie referatu na konferencji naukowej to sytuacja, w której uczony nie tylko przedstawia wyniki swoich badań, będących wypadkową jego wiedzy akademickiej i kompetencji zawodowej, ale także dokonuje autoprezentacji. Jest to więc czynność złożona, zależna od wielu czynników, takich jak osobowość uczonego, sytuacja, w której się on znajduje, oraz słuchająca referatu publiczność; jako taka czynność ta stanowi duże zagrożenie dla twarzy (wizerunku własnego) uczonego, który w tej sytuacji musi sprostać oczekiwaniom odbiorców.

Celem postawionym w opracowaniu jest analiza stylów autoprezentacyjnych stosowanych przez uczonych w czasie wygłaszania referatów na konferencjach naukowych. Materiał poddany analizie został zebrany za pomocą obserwacji uczestniczącej podczas konferencji naukowych (polskich i międzynarodowych) poświęconych różnym dyscyplinom akademickim (psychiatrii, psychologii i ogólnie pojętej humanistyce).

### 1. Introduction

*Research presentation* during an academic conference is a situation which involves not only a presentation of the scholar's research results, but also the creation of his/her self-image. This complex activity is highly threatening to the person's *face*, as the face (self-image) he or she presents to the audience has to meet their expectations in several different respects.

The aim of the study is to analyse self-presentational styles employed by scholars presenting research papers during academic conferences.

The data used in the analysis come from participant observation carried out during Polish and international conferences devoted to different academic disciplines. Research presentations were observed during the following conferences:

1. The Conference: "Kontrowersje w psychiatrii 2010 – Zaburzenia lękowe i lęk jako objaw" (Controversies in psychiatry 2010 – Anxiety disorders and anxiety as a symptom). Kraków, April 23–24, 2010 (psychiatry).
2. The 22nd International Conference on Foreign/Second Language Acquisition, Szczyrk, May 27–29, 2010 (applied linguistics).
3. The International Conference: "Posttraumatic Disorders – Risk Factors, Concepts, Treatment". Warsaw, July 2–4, 2010 (psychology).
4. The Symposium: "Transdyscyplinarność badań nad komunikacją medialną" (Transdisciplinarity of research on media communication). Katowice, November 4–5, 2010 (the humanities – linguistics, sociology, psychology, media studies and arts).

As self-presentational styles are culture-specific, it is reasonable to expect differences in self-presentation observed in cross-cultural communication. The concept of *cross-cultural* is understood here as involving "comparisons of communication across cultures" (Gudykunst, 2001: 19), encompassing speakers of different languages or from different cultures/countries, as well as including "speakers from the same country of different class, region, age and even gender" (Tannen, 1985: 203). Apart from that, in the study *cross-cultural* also involves communicative behaviour of representatives of different areas of knowledge (e.g., the humanities, natural sciences) and different academic disciplines (e.g., linguistics, communication studies, anthropology).

## 2. Self-presentation

The concept of self-presentation, popularized by Erving Goffman in his seminal work *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* (1959), refers to how people attempt to present themselves to control or shape how others view them.

It involves expressing oneself and behaving in ways that create a desired impression. Self-presentation is part of a broader set of behaviors called *impression management*. Impression management refers to the controlled presentation of information about all sorts of things, including information about other people or events. Self-presentation refers specifically to information about the self (Terry et al., 2007: 385).

Self-presentation is a goal-oriented activity: people try to influence the impressions of the self formed by an audience in order to benefit from the images by gaining respect, power or other desirable social rewards (Schlenker, 2003; Terry et al., 2007). Impressions people wish to convey of themselves vary depending on (Nezlek and Leary, 2002: 211–212; Schlenker and Pontari, 2000):

- their self-concepts, their personality characteristics, constraints imposed by salient social roles, and their desired identity images, that is those associated with beneficial consequences for the person, such as approval, respect, or material rewards;
- the social context, that is the important others with whom they interact, their relationship with them and a generally understood situation;
- the identities and values of the others “to whom they are impression-managing, and the current and potential nature of their public images.”

Apart from that, the individual’s self-presentational style is also affected by such factors as his/her social status, gender, ethnicity, language proficiency, age and level of education (Billow, 1997). Thus, self-presentation is a complex activity that is shaped by “a combination of personality, situational, and audience factors” (Schlenker, 2003: 498). Like other acts of communication, self-presentation is also conditioned by social values and interactional norms specific to a particular culture. The end-result of the self-presentation activity is a self-image – face, a complex of positive attributes the individual wants to be associated with and characterized by.

The main self-presentational motive is to create, maintain, or modify one’s public self congruent with one’s ideal (Baumeister, 1982). Con-

structuring “a desired identity” results from the two desires for having positive, socially desirable qualities, and for the approval of others (Schlenker, 2003). People differ, however, in the extent to which they are motivated to control how they are perceived and evaluated by others. Individual differences related to impression-construction lie also in public self-consciousness, fear of negative evaluation, approval motivation, and self-presentational goals and styles (Nezlek and Leary, 2002: 212–213). Individual differences in self-presentational style relate to basic psychological motives, such as the need for affiliation, the need for achievement, or the need for power (Nezlek and Leary, 2002). In the case of research presentation at an academic conference, it is the need for achievement that seems to prevail, and a significant proportion of self-presentation revolves around conveying an image of competence (Terry et al., 2007). In such an important, evaluative situation, in which the actor may feel himself/herself to be the centre of an audience’s attention and experience shyness or stage fright (Schlenker and Pontari, 2000: 201), careful presentation of the self is especially difficult.

### 3. Research presentation – a genre of academic discourse and a one-actor show

Research presentation can be looked at from different perspectives, either as a one-actor show (using Goffman’s (1959) dramaturgical approach to social interaction), or as a genre of spoken academic discourse.

According to Ken Hyland (2009), research presentation is one of the key genres for the dissemination of academic research. It can hardly be defined as a homogeneous genre. Research presentations differ with respect to their function, purpose and length. There are research seminars and keynote lectures given by invited speakers, and papers presented at conferences. Some of them involve a presentation of research results, sometimes already published, and then their function is to draw attention to the author’s book or paper; others present work in progress, and their main function is to elicit feedback from the audience (Reer-shemius, 2012).

Research presentations are hybrid forms of academic discourse: prepared as a written text and given orally. It is “scripted spoken discourse,” which is on the borderline with written discourse. Such presentations are classified as spoken discourse because they are intended to be heard, and the meaning expressed verbally is enriched with stress and intonation, and some extralinguistic features (Cutting, 2011: 157). Like in ordinary spoken discourse, there are hesitation sounds, pauses, repetitions and slips of the tongue.

Often combining an oral talk with a slide show or handouts, research presentations are described as “a multi-modal genre” (Reershemius, 2012). Slide shows and handouts, which are forms of written discourse, often serve as an illustration of the presentation or are shortened versions of the presented paper. However, irrespective of its type, function and form, research presentations always involve self-presentation.

An academic conference is a situation in which members of the academic discourse community meet to present and discuss their research. Such a gathering, usually, consists of experts and novices. Belonging to the same discourse community, they share “common goals, participatory mechanisms, information exchange, community specific genres, a highly specialized terminology and a high general level of expertise” (Swales, 1990: 29).

During academic conferences, participants can perform three different roles:

- the chairperson of the session,
- the speaker presenting a research paper,
- the audience.

These three roles involve different perspectives, different activities and responsibilities.

The chairperson is the leader of the session who has to take care of its organization. He or she provides a proper frame of the meeting. It is up to the chair to ensure that all the speakers receive their allotted time and that the audience has the opportunity for questions and comments.

The speaker acts as an actor in front of an expert audience. In order to make his/her research presentation a successful performance, he/she puts on appropriate facial expressions, uses suitable speech patterns

and employs stage props (e.g., a slide show) (cf. Goffman, 1959). Being a scholar is not only a social role, but an element of the individual's identity. Scholars devote a lot of energy and time to research and to writing their treatises. Commitment to the work often leads to a very close emotional relation with and attachment to results of their work. As a result their research becomes for them a face-sensitive issue. Thus any criticism of their academic work is perceived as an attack on their face, on its competence aspect in particular.

Discussion of the research always involves evaluation. Rejection of the research results may be treated as negation of the research usefulness; it may have a destructive impact on the scholar's self-identity (Bogdanowska, 2010). That is why feeling himself/herself to be the centre of the audience's attention, the speaker may experience anxiety, caused by "the prospect or presence of personal evaluation" (Schlenker and Leary, 1985: 172; Schlenker and Pontari, 2000: 201).

The expert audience consisting of members of the same academic discourse community is engaged in evaluating the presentation; afterwards, some of its members can ask the speaker questions or make comments on the paper. The audience who is especially powerful and expert generates greater social anxiety and increases the speaker's motivation to create a desired self-impression (Schlenker and Leary, 1985: 177; Leary and Kowalski, 2002). As a consequence, the speaker's behaviour is shaped to a large extent by the audience's values and expectations, and his/her awareness of being evaluated increases the need for showing a certain self-image (Leary and Kowalski, 2002: 44).

Each of the participants of the conference session has certain moves ascribed to his/her role. All types of research presentations have a similar structure and are composed of the same constituent elements (Ventola, 2002):

- The chairperson introduces the speaker.
- The speaker thanks the chairperson for the introduction.
- The speaker presents his/her paper.
- The speaker thanks the audience for their attention.
- The speaker is applauded by the audience.
- The chairperson thanks the speaker for his/her presentation.
- The chairperson opens a discussion.

- Participants make comments and ask the speaker questions.
  - The speaker responds to the comments and answers questions posed by the audience.
  - The chairperson once again thanks the speaker for the presentation.
  - The speaker and the chairperson are applauded by the audience.
- It is just the presence of the audience, their evaluative power and inquisitive behaviour that make the speaker, apart from presenting the paper, engage in self-presentation.

#### 4. The significance of the conference language

Creating a self-image is “a kind of social and ‘discursive work’” (De Fina, 2011: 267). Paper presenters do so “through symbols, such as clothing, demeanour, or the use of certain objects, the single most important system of symbols for expressing and negotiating identities is language” (De Fina, 2011: 267). Apart from performing our identities, language is a way “of making judgements about one another’s moral character, intelligence, social class, personality, expertise, and even intentions” (Keating and Duranti, 2011: 332).

In the majority of international conferences, English is one of the languages or the only language of the conference. This is an element of a global tendency. English has become an international lingua franca used by people of different ethnic, cultural and social backgrounds. Nowadays about a quarter of the world’s population can communicate in English (Crystal, 2003). It has also become “the lingua franca of academics” (Mauranen, 2007).

In some academic disciplines, English appears to be the universal language of communication. It is currently “the undisputed language of science and technology, and scientific journals in many countries are now switching from the vernacular to English” (Nunan, 2003: 860). In many conference circulars, one can find the information on the conference language, for instance:

*The language of the conference is English and all presentations will be made in English. Speakers and delegates are advised that it is necessary to have*



*a good standard of spoken English to take full advantage of the conference.* (European Transport Conference, Glasgow, Scotland, UK, October 10–12, 2011, <http://abstracts.etcproceedings.org>)

Thus, a good command of English is indispensable for every scholar to be able to participate in academic life. As Duszak (1998: 256) claims, due to the globalization of communication processes and popularization of Anglo-American patterns of discursive behaviour, the status of the discourse community with respect to the linguistic community has become a little complicated. English in academic contexts is used as a universal language. Communicating in English, scholars – members of cultures other than the English-language culture – often behave according to the social norms specific to their native culture and follow native culture patterns of behaviour. As Eija Ventola (2002: 26) indicates,

the reality today is that conferences are multicultural, multilingual and multimodal events. They are perhaps not multilingual in terms of ‘the language of the presentation,’ since English is so often nowadays the only language used for presentations at international conferences. But the native languages of the members of the audience influence the construction of meaning-making and the delivery of the presentations.

However, it is only one side of the coin, as the English language and Anglo-American culture which dominate in academia have a strong impact on scholars’ patterns of behaviour in their native language and their self-presentational styles. Irrespective of the language of the paper’s delivery, research presentations at international conferences constitute a combination of Anglo-American patterns of behaviour and those specific to the speaker’s native culture.

## 5. Self-presentation of the research paper presenter

Presenting a research paper at a conference, the scholar at the same time (Heinemann and Viehweger, 1991: 149; in: Duszak, 1998):

- 
- creates and presents himself/herself,
  - establishes a relationship with others (the audience),
  - transfers some information to them,
  - makes them behave in a certain way.

In fact, all four activities may contribute to the creation of a certain self-image, a complex of attributes the individual wants to be associated with and characterized by. Among the socially relevant qualities of the individual's self-image, we can distinguish three groups of attributes (Bogdanowska-Jakubowska, 2010):

- attributes tied to moral conduct (i.e. rightness and honesty of behaviour, and faithfulness to one's ideals and one's friends);
- attributes tied to a position in a social setting (e.g., educational attainment, occupational status, competence and skills);
- attributes tied to communication skills in managing identity and relational issues.

In different situations, different qualities and different aspects of the individual's self-image are foregrounded. Accordingly, playing different social roles, in front of different people, individuals can have different self-presentational goals (Nezlek and Leary, 2002: 213), for example:

- To be perceived morally upstanding (exemplification),
- To be perceived as competent (self-promotion),
- To be perceived as friendly (ingratiation).

In the research presentation situation, "speakers actively demonstrate their expertise and discursively construct their professional identities" (Van De Mieroop, 2007: 1121). One of the requirements which have to be met by members of the academic community is adhering to the code of academic ethics. Like face, ethics is social and relational in nature. Ethical behaviour forms an indispensable part of face maintenance. Ethics – understood as "a set of standards by which a particular group or community decides to regulate its behaviour" – distinguishes "what is legitimate or acceptable in pursuit of their aims from what is not" (Flew, 1979: 112). In academic contexts, it refers to standards of morality that apply to scholars in relation to other scholars, and it is associated with academic research (cf. Bogdanowska-Jakubowska, 2012). Moral quali-

ties are rarely mentioned, they are rather implied. Scholars' rightness and honesty are usually taken for granted, unless there is evidence suggesting otherwise.

Although research presentation is monologic in nature, it is also an occasion to establish and maintain a good relationship with the audience. This is achieved by, what John Swales calls, *the listener orientations*. They provide the outer frame, and "are a consequence of the real-time face-to-face character of the genre. They include such elements as acknowledging the chair's introduction, calling the audience to attention ('Ladies and Gentlemen') and signalling that the presentation is over and questions can be taken" (Swales, 1990: 183). What follows is a discussion consisting of questions and/or comments from the audience, responded to by the speaker. The discussion constitutes an element of the research presentation which has a definitely interactional character. Thus apart from the expertise in his/her field, the speaker has to show some relational skills. Responding to comments and questions from the audience, he/she has to take into consideration both self-face and other-face, as such an exchange of opinions can be a threatening situation for the speaker as well as for the discussants.

However, in the whole situation of research presentation it is the speaker's face that is subjected to the greatest threat. As has been mentioned above, two aspects of the speaker's face matter here: his/her academic competence and facework competence. The former includes his/her expertise in the field under discussion, the ability to think analytically, and the ability to draw conclusions and to argue clearly. The latter involves a combination of cultural knowledge, helping the individual to understand other people's cultural perspectives, with "communication skills in managing self's and other's face-related concerns," such as identity- and relational-management issues (Ting-Toomey and Kurogi, 1998: 200). Relational skills and facework competence are vital in any type of social interaction, and they condition its successful outcome.

The presenter's self-image created during a conference session, which is a face-to-face interaction, depends not only on his/her linguistic behaviour but also on the management of his/her facial appearance and emotional expressions. There are significant differences across cultures as to *display rules* regarding emotional expressions (Ekman, 1999) and as to

the extent to which facial expression of emotions is free or controlled. For example, the Japanese mask negative emotions with a smile; they smile when they are pleased and when they are embarrassed (like Westerners), but also when they are depressed and shocked. For them smiles are commonly false (McNeill, 1998). The Americans treat the smile like a social mask which should be put on whenever the person comes into contact with others, as a happy looking person is perceived in American culture as one to be trusted and respected, somebody that is competent and successful. The Poles, who smile in as many different situations as members of other cultures, do not like to smile "without any particular reason," and perceive the "smiling mask" as something extremely artificial and insincere. For them, it is a solemn face that is a sign of competence and professionalism (Bogdanowska-Jakubowska, 2010). Apart from cultural factors, the presenters' management of their facial appearance and emotional expressions depends also on personality factors.

In spite of these differences, presenters often resort to smiling. Presenting their papers they smile to enhance their public image, because a person who is smiling is perceived as one who controls the situation and is friendly. Such a smile is called by Szarota (2006) the *self-presentational smile*.

The smile is also employed to hide embarrassment and stress. Research presentation is a very stressful situation, the stress resulting from a potential face-threat. In front of the expert audience, some individuals, especially novices, may feel embarrassed, inhibited, inferior, self-conscious or exposed. In his pioneering paper "Embarrassment and social organization" (1956), in which he investigates the interactional organization of embarrassment, Goffman claims that this may happen "if expressive facts threaten or discredit the assumptions a participant has projected about his identity" (Goffman, 1956: 265). To avoid being embarrassed, or at least to hide embarrassment, people try to preserve and negotiate face both verbally and nonverbally. And a smiling mask is an effective tool in such a situation.

Another useful tool of face maintenance and a relevant communication device is humour (Forabosco, 2011). The use of humour by the presenter affects the perception of his/her overall communicative image by the audience (Tannen, 1984). It is also an effective attention-

getting device which makes the presentation more lively and attractive. It evokes joy in the audience, manifest in smiles or laughter, which facilitates in-group interaction and helps the presenter to establish a common ground and maintain a good relationship with them (Attardo, 1994; Davis, 2008).

As has already been said, the style of self-presentation is shaped by a combination of personality, situational, and audience factors, and is conditioned by social values and interactional norms specific to a particular culture. In the case of academic conference participants, additional factors are the membership of a given academic discourse community (e.g., Polish linguists, American linguists, applied linguists, psychologists or psychiatrists) and the use of a particular language (e.g., Polish as a native language, English as a native language, English as an additional language).

Representatives of a particular academic discipline, which, as Hyland (2011: 178) maintains, is itself a “rather nebulous” idea, share a professional context on which the success of their academic production depends. The concept of academic discipline goes far beyond the knowledge and methods used by its adepts.

Essentially, we can see disciplines as language-using communities and this helps us join writers, texts and readers together. Communities provide the context within which we learn to communicate and to interpret each other's talk, gradually acquiring the specialized discourse competencies to participate as members. So we can see disciplines as particular ways of doing things – and predominantly as particular ways of using language to engage with others. Speakers and writers thus make language choices to gain support, express collegiality and resolve difficulties in ways which fit the community's assumptions, methods, and knowledge. (Hyland, 2011: 179)

Apart from discipline-specific uses of language, there are also discipline-specific ways of meaning production in interaction. Hyland (2006: 41) writes about identifying how we communicate “in a way that others can see as ‘doing biology’ or ‘doing sociology’.” Differences in research presentation result also from different research cultures and presentation practices.

## 6. An analysis of self-presentational styles of the conference paper presenters

As the four conferences during which participant observation took place were addressed to scholars representing two different areas of research, we decided to conduct two separate analyses of research paper presenters' self-presentational styles, one concerning the psychology/psychiatry conferences, the other – the humanities conferences. In both sections the analysed examples come from presentations in Polish, as well as from presentations in English as a native or additional language.

### 6.1. Psychiatric and psychological research presentations

The two conferences – “Controversies in psychiatry 2010 – Anxiety disorders and anxiety as a symptom” and “Posttraumatic Disorders – Risk Factors, Concepts, Treatment” – were international conferences. In both of them, there were two conference languages, Polish and English; Polish scholars presented their papers in Polish, other scholars presented in English. Although one of the conferences was addressed mainly to psychiatrists, and the other mainly to psychologists, in both cases psychiatrists and psychologists were among the participants and presenters.

Research presentations during both conferences were carried out in largely the same way. The speakers focused mainly on the content of their presentations, which sometimes reflected negatively on the form of the message. This refers both to the stylistic aspects of the presentations in Polish, and to the construction of the message and its articulation in English. The oral presentations were always accompanied by a (PowerPoint) slide show. Presenting their papers, the scholars simultaneously tried to manage the impressions they made on the audience.

Scholars' expectations related to the aspiration to the ideal of pure knowledge and the requirements of rationalism and objectivism are determined by academic ethics. Although an essential element of academic life, ethics are rarely directly referred to in academic conference situations (see Example 1), but rather taken for granted.

1. *Coś jest kompletnie nieetyczne.*

(Something is completely unethical.)

*Bylibyśmy niesprawiedliwi, gdybyśmy nie wspomnieli o...*

(We would be unfair, if we didn't mention...)

The scholars' self-presentations were mainly aimed at making the impression of competence and academic expertise. The observed presenters often tried to explain the reasons for taking up a given topic or for presenting the paper (see Example 2).

2. *Perspektywa wygłoszenia tego referatu zmusiła mnie do zajęcia się tym problemem.*

(The prospect of presenting this paper made me take up this problem.)

*Zostałam poproszona o ten wykład i przyznam się, że wtedy zastanawiałam się, czy on ma sens.*

(I have been asked to present this paper and I must admit that at first I wondered whether it made sense.)

They were emotionally attached to their topics and expected others – the audience – to share their positive attitude towards them (see Example 3).

3. *Mam nadzieję, że dla państwa wykład ten będzie interesujący.*

(I hope that for you (ladies and gentlemen) the paper will be interesting.)

*Jest to bardzo ciekawe dla mnie i myślę, że dla państwa także.*

(This is very interesting for me, and I think that for you (ladies and gentlemen), too.)

Paper presentation is an evaluative situation, in which careful self-presentation is especially relevant. Rejection or negative evaluation of the research results may be threatening to the scholar's face and have a destructive impact on his or her self-identity. In such a potentially face-threatening situation, some speakers engaged in positive self-presentation, aimed at enhancing their face, for example they resorted

to explicit boasting or made comments on their own activity, which could be expected to be positively evaluated (see Example 4).

4. *I tu się pochwalę...*

(Here I would like to boast about...)

*Proszę państwa, wspólnie z Instytutem Psychiatrii i Neurologii i Instytutem Zdrowia Publicznego w Warszawie jesteśmy w fazie, powiedziałbym, daleko zaawansowanego przygotowania badania epidemiologicznego na reprezentatywnej populacji 10 000 Polaków.*

(Ladies and gentlemen, together with the Institute of Psychiatry and Neurology and the Institute of Public Health in Warsaw we are in the process of, I would say, well advanced preparations of epidemiological tests on a representative population of 10,000 Poles.)

The majority of the presentations were audience-centred. The speakers tried to make contact with them and establish a relationship. As a consequence, their presentations acquired a rather interactive character. All of the speakers started with *the listener orientations*. Some of them greeted the audience (see Example 5). Others commented on their present situation (see Example 6), or talked about their intentions (see Example 7). Some speakers directly addressed the audience, as if making an attempt to engage them in the process of paper presentation (see Example 8).

5. *Dzień dobry państwu.*

(Good morning, ladies and gentlemen.)

6. *Chciałbym wykorzystać to, że mówię jako ostatni.*

(I would like to make the most of the fact that I'm the last presenter.)

*Nie mam łatwo, wszystko już właściwie zostało powiedziane.*

(My situation is not easy, everything has already been said.)

7. *Ja chciałbym państwu powiedzieć o...*

(I would like to tell you (ladies and gentlemen) about...)



*Ja bym chciał dodać jeszcze jedną cegielkę.*

(I would like to make my contribution to it.)

8. *Pewnie państwo zwrócili na to uwagę albo nie, że wszyscy kolejni mówcy odwoływali się do tych mówców poprzednich, prawda?*

(Perhaps, you (ladies and gentlemen) have noticed, or not, that all the successive speakers referred to the previous speakers, didn't they?)

*Państwo pamiętają...* (You (ladies and gentlemen) must remember...)

*Jak państwo widziecie...* (As you (ladies and gentlemen) can see...)

Another strategy to establish a relationship with the audience was the use of the "inclusive" *we* (see Example 9).

9. *Możemy sobie równie dobrze wyjaśnić...*

(We can equally well explain...)

*I to trochę obrazuje sytuację, w której jesteśmy.*

(And this illustrates a bit the situation in which we are.)

Politeness is one of the indispensable elements of positive self-presentation. The observed presenters behaved in a respectful way towards the audience, directly addressing or referring to individual participants, using their academic titles (see Example 10).

10. *Jeżeli Pan Profesor pozwoli, to...*

(If you (Mr. Professor) allow me...)

*To jest kwestia, o której już mówiła Pani Profesor...*

(It is a question which (Ms.) Professor was talking about.)

One of the most typical features of the academic style is the use of impersonal forms in Polish and the use of passive voice in English. In the presentations observed, however, such constructions were extremely rare. The presenters did not hesitate to include the "personal element" in their performances (see Examples 11 and 12). Some of them even

made subjective evaluations, using colloquial expressions, such as *fajna sytuacja* (a great situation) or *favourite things* (see Example 12).

11. *To już nie będę tego powtarzał.*

(I won't repeat it now.)

*Przejdę od razu do...* (I'll move on right away to...)

*To mi się tu kojarzy z...* (This reminds me of...)

*I think that it deserves further investigation.*

*I'm not sure whether...*

12. *Myszę, że to jest fajna sytuacja, w której ta wiedza dotycząca zaburzeń lękowych wzajemnie się nadbudowuje i łączy.*

(I think that it is a great situation in which the knowledge of anxiety disorders builds up and the results of our research complement each other.)

*This is one of my favourite things.*

Apart from the formulae traditionally classified as polite, for example greetings and thanks (see Examples 14 and 15), the presenters used many expressions which seemed appropriate for a given situation and helped build the atmosphere of politeness. The role of these expressions, known as *gambits* (Keller, 1981), *discourse particles* (Wierzbicka, 1991), or *pragmatic particles* (Kryk-Kastovsky, 1995), was to reduce uncertainty in the audience and keep them informed about the structure of the presentation and the speaker's next move (see Example 13).

13. *Na koniec, taka trochę ciekawostka.* (smiling)

(Finally, an interesting side note.)

*To już chyba ostatni slajd.* (This should be the last slide.)

*Już kończę.* (smiling) (I'm almost finished.)

14. *Udało mi się skrócić, wnioski rozrzuciłem w trakcie. Dziękuję państwu, bardzo.* (smiling)

(I've managed to shorten (my presentation), and I've scattered the conclusions in the text. Thank you very much.)

*Thank you very much for having me here. (smiling)*

*Chciałabym podziękować organizatorom, że zaprosili mnie tu. (turning the head towards one of the organizers and making eye contact with him)*

*(I would like to thank the organizers for inviting me here.)*

*Dziękuję państwu bardzo. (bowing one's head)*

*(Thank you (ladies and gentlemen) very much.)*

15. *Dziękuję bardzo za pytanie.*

*(Thank you very much for the question.)*

## 6.2. Research presentations in the humanities

The other two conferences – the 22nd International Conference on Foreign/Second Language Acquisition (the SLA Conference) and the Symposium on “Transdisciplinarity of research on media communication” (the Symposium) – do not constitute an example of homogeneous academic behaviour. The former was addressed to applied linguists, and was an international conference with English as an official language. The latter was addressed exclusively to Polish scholars, with Polish being a natural conference language choice; it gathered scholars representing the generally understood humanities (Polish linguistics, sociology, psychology, media studies and arts).

The research presentations in the two conferences differed. In the SLA Conference, the speakers focused mainly on the content of their presentations. The form was often neglected, although this hardly had a negative impact on the presentation. The oral presentations were very often accompanied by a (PowerPoint) slide show.

In spite of a great variety of cultures represented by the conference participants, no significant differences in self-presentations were noticed which could be due to culture. This can be explained by the common tradition of linguistic studies in English, in which the language is not only a system of communication, but is associated with certain values and imposes on its users certain patterns of behaviour.

In the Symposium, the speakers focused on the form of their presentation, but this did not have a negative impact on the content. Thus, there is no complementarity of the psychiatry/psychology tandem and the humanities. The oral presentations were rarely accompanied by a (PowerPoint) slide show.

In both conferences, the majority of presentations were speaker-centred. Managing the impressions they made on the audience, the speakers did not always try to make contact with them. This was due to personality factors which had some influence on their behaviour, especially on:

- the degree of emotional load (see Example 16);
- the amount of the “personal element” in the presentation (see Examples 17 and 18) (the presenters used both the first person singular and the first person plural pronouns, even though there was only one author);
- the intensity of interactivity.

16. *You know what? Dead end!*

*I'm rather anxious...*

*I'm trivial!*

17. *I'm a psychologist too.*

*I myself will follow the work of Nowakowska-Kempna.*

*I've said that... but I do not agree with you.*

*I'm looking more closely at the concept of...*

18. *We can say that...*

*We already knew that...*

*We have counted...*

*Jest dla nas oczywiste, że...*

(It is obvious to us that...)

*Przeprowadziliśmy analizę...*

(We've carried out an analysis...)

The aspects of self that were prioritized were the same as in the psychiatry/psychology conferences. Direct reference to moral or ethical aspects of the self was not observed in any presentation in these two conferences. However, there was a greater stress put on academic competence (see Example 19) and eloquence. In the case of the Polish

representatives of the humanities, the stress on eloquence can be explained by the multiple role of their native language – Polish – as a communication system, an educational tool and a subject of study. For them eloquence means the power of expression and a fluent style. In the case of the scholars who use English as an additional language, eloquence involves also a good command of the language.

19. *This model has not been used in pedagogical psychology except by me.*

*It is a continuation of my previous presentation.*

*W książce, którą napisałam wspólnie z...*

*(In the book I've written together with...)*

*I would like to propose a model which is an alternative to the model presented by...*

*Nasza książka miała określić skalę tego zjawiska.*

*(Our book was to determine the range of the phenomenon.)*

The presentations in the humanistic conferences had less interactive character than the ones during the psychiatry/psychology conferences. However, almost every research presentation had the frame in which the listener orientations marked its beginning (see Examples 20 and 21) and end (see Example 22).

20. *Chciałbym dziś państwu przedstawić...*

*(Today I would like to introduce to you (ladies and gentlemen)...)*

*Mam nadzieję, że państwo nie będą zbyt znudzeni tym przydługim wstępem. (smiling)*

*(I hope that you (ladies and gentlemen) won't be too bored by this longish introduction.)*

*Drodzy państwo, chciałbym dzisiaj zająć się...*

*(Dear all (ladies and gentlemen), today I would like to deal with...)*

21. *Thank you very much.* (to the chair of the session)

22. *Thank you for listening!*

*Thank you for your attention!*

*Dziękuję państwu za uwagę.*

(Thank you (ladies and gentlemen) for your attention.)

*Zdążyłam! Bardzo dziękuję!* (smiling with a sigh of relief)

(I've managed! Thank you very much!)

Apart from the expressions of gratitude and occasional apologies or excuses, the presenters produced other polite utterances (see Example 23) and used expressions intended to keep the audience informed about their next move (see Example 24).

23. *Two minutes, if I may?*

*Byłabym wdzięczna za dodatkowe trzy minuty.*

(I would be grateful for three additional minutes.)

24. *Now, I will try to analyse the results of the questionnaire.*

*I will move on to...*

*Podsumowując,...*

(To sum up,...)

*Przejdę teraz do wniosków.*

(Now I will move on to the conclusions.)

The use of the so-called polite expressions and various gambits turns the research presentations into a truly interactional speech event. The presenters' behaviour, whether it is polite or merely politic (cf. Watts, 2003), used to establish and maintain good relations with the audience, can be interpreted as a self-face-enhancing strategy.

## 7. Conclusions

The main conclusion coming from this study is that the self-presentational style used by a person presenting a paper during an academic conference depends on a combination of factors:

- his/her membership of a particular academic discourse community;
- the audience;
- the language used, (the native language or an additional language);
- the culture he/she belongs to;
- his/her personality.

Having analysed the observed presentations in terms of the three aspects of the speakers' self-image (morality, social position and relationships with others), we can say that:

- The moral/ethical element in the presenters' self-image was almost totally neglected. Their high moral standards were taken for granted. Only two instances of the direct reference to moral issues were observed.
- In all the conferences, the speakers paid the greatest attention to presenting their own expertise in the academic discipline they represented. However, members of the two academic discourse communities did so in different ways. Psychiatrists and psychologists concentrated on the content of their presentations, neglecting their form. Humanists focused on the form without neglecting the content.
- The relational aspect of the presenters' self-image was handled largely in a similar way. The majority of the speakers addressed the audience during paper presentation and tried to establish a relationship with them. However, the presentations in the psychiatry/psychology conferences had a more interactive character than those in the humanistic conferences. What these four conferences had in common is the "personal element" existent in almost every presentation. The authors did not "hide" behind their research; they made presence, face-to-face with the audience.

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